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ABRAHAM LINCOLN IN ILLINOIS.

PART II.

THE second session of the Thirty-seventh Congress convened on the first Monday of December, 1861. The Senators and Representatives of the rebellious States were no longer with us. The rumblings of treason, deep and significant, were everywhere heard. What was to be the outcome no one could tell. Anxiety and sadness sat enthroned in both Houses, but there was faith unshaken and courage unsubdued. A state of things existed well calculated to shake the stoutest hearts. The loyal members of both Senate and House were closely organized to concert measures to meet the appalling emergencies that confronted them. It was determined that each House should appoint one of its members to form a committee to watch the current of events and discover as far as possible the intentions and acts of the rebels. This committee of "Public Safety," as it might be called, was a small one—only two members, Governor Grimes, the Senator from Iowa, on the part of the Senate, and myself on the part of the House. Clothed with full powers, we at once put ourselves in communication with General Scott, the head of the army, with head-quarters at Washington, and Chief-of-Police Kennedy, of New York City, a loyal and true man, with a skill unsurpassed by a Fouché or a Vidocque. He at once sent us some of his most skillful and trusted detectives; and earnestly, loyally, and courageously they went to work to unravel the plots and schemes set on foot to destroy us. And never was detective work more skillfully and faithfully done, not only in Washington, but in Baltimore and Richmond and Alexandria. They were all good rebels; they had long beards, and wore slouched hats and seedy coats; they chewed tobacco and smoked cheap cigars; damned the Yankees and drank bad whiskey; and they obtained a great deal of valuable information in respect to hostile plans and schemes.

As the 4th of March drew near, what occupied our most anxious thought was, how Mr. Lincoln could get to Washington and be inaugurated. Another committee was formed, one from each House, to look after that matter. Governor Seward was the Senate member, and I was put on on the part of the House, for the reason, perhaps, that I was from Illinois, a known personal friend of the President, who had been in close correspondence with him all winter. Associating ourselves together, we came to the conclusion that everything must be done with the most profound secrecy. Governor Seward, his son Frederic W. Seward, subsequently his Assistant Secretary of State, and myself were the only persons in Washington who had any knowledge whatever of Mr. Lincoln's proposed movements. That there was a conspiracy in Baltimore to assassinate him as he should pass through, there can be no reasonable doubt. We hoped he might be able to come through in the day-time from Philadelphia, taking a train secretly and cutting the wires, so that his departure could not be known. But General Scott's detectives in Baltimore had developed such a condition of things, that Governor Seward thought that the President-elect and his friends in Philadelphia should be advised in regard thereto, and on the night of the 22d of February he sent his son Frederic W. over to Philadelphia to consult with them. Till now we had believed the President would come over from Philadelphia on the train leaving there at noon of the 23d. In the mean time the President had promised to run up to Harrisburg to attend a reception of the Pennsylvania Legislature at twelve o'clock on that day. Up to this time the situation had been fully discussed by the friends of Mr. Lincoln, in the light of all the information received, but no particular programme agreed upon. It was not until the party started for Harrisburg the next morning that the best method of getting to Washington was finally talked over. Mr. Lincoln had previously had a conversation with the detective, Pinkerton, and Mr. Frederic W. Seward in regard to the condition of things at Baltimore. The Hon. Norman B. Judd, of Chicago, one of the most conspicuous and trusted friends of Mr. Lincoln, who had accompanied the party from Springfield, suggested a plan which, after full discussion by Mr. Lincoln and all his friends present, was agreed upon and successfully carried out. This plan, as is generally known, was that after the dinner which Governor Curtin had tendered to him had been finished, at six o'clock in the

afternoon, he should take a special car and train from Harrisburg for Philadelphia to intercept the night train from New York to Washington. The telegraph wires from Harrisburg were all cut, so there could be no possible telegraphic connection with the outside world. The connection was made at Philadelphia. Mr. Lincoln was transferred to the Washington train without observation, to arrive at his destination on time the next morning without the least miscarriage, as will be stated hereafter. On the afternoon of the 23d, Mr. Seward came to my seat in the House of Representatives and told me he had no information from his son nor any one else in respect of Mr. Lincoln's movements, and that he could have none, as the wires were all cut; but he thought it very probable he would arrive in the regular train from Philadelphia, and he suggested that we should meet at the depot to receive him. We were promptly on hand; the train arrived in time, and with strained eyes we watched the descent of the passengers. But there was no Mr. Lincoln among them; though his arrival was by no means certain, yet we were much disappointed. But as there was no telegraphic connection, it was impossible for us to have any information. It was no use to speculate—sad, disappointed, and under the empire of conflicting emotions we separated to go to our respective homes, but agreeing to be at the depot on the arrival of the New York train the next morning before daylight, hoping either to meet the President or get some information as to his movements. I was on hand in season, but to my great disappointment Governor Seward did not appear. I planted myself behind one of the great pillars in the old Washington and Baltimore depot where I could see and not be observed. Presently the train came rumbling in on time. It was a moment of great anxiety to me. There has been a great deal printed in the newspapers about Mr. Lincoln's arrival in Washington, and about the "Scotch cap" and "big shawl" he wore through Baltimore, etc., etc., most of which is mere stuff. I propose now to tell about his arrival at Washington, from my own personal knowledge—what I saw with my own eyes and what I heard with my own ears, not the eyes and ears of some one else. As I have stated, I stood behind the pillar awaiting the arrival of the train. When it came to a stop I watched with fear and trembling to see the passengers descend. I saw every car emptied, and there was no Mr. Lincoln. I was well-nigh in despair, and when about to leave I saw slowly emerge from the

last sleeping-car three persons. I could not mistake the long, lank form of Mr. Lincoln, and my heart bounded with joy and gratitude. He had on a soft low-crowned hat, a muffler around his neck, and a short bob-tailed overcoat. Any one who knew him at that time could not have failed to recognize him at once, but I must confess he looked more like a well-to-do farmer from one of the back towns of Jo Davies's county coming to Washington to see the city, take out his land warrant and get the patent for his farm, than the President of the United States. The only persons that accompanied Mr. Lincoln were Pinkerton, the well-known detective, recently deceased, and Ward H. Lamon. When they were fairly on the platform, and a short distance from the car, I stepped forward and accosted the President: "How are you, Lincoln?" At this unexpected and rather familiar salutation the gentlemen were apparently somewhat startled, but Mr. Lincoln, who had recognized me, relieved them at once by remarking in his peculiar voice: "This is only Washburne!" Then we all exchanged congratulations, and walked out to the front of the depot, where I had a carriage in waiting. Entering the carriage (all four of us), we drove rapidly to Willard's Hotel, entering on Fourteenth Street, before it was fairly daylight. The porter showed us into the little receiving-room at the head of the stairs, and at my direction went to the office to have Mr. Lincoln assigned a room. We had not been in the hotel more than two minutes before Governor Seward hurriedly entered, much out of breath, and somewhat chagrined to think he had not been up in season to be at the depot on the arrival of the train. The meeting of those two great men under the extraordinary circumstances which surrounded them was full of emotion and thankfulness. I soon took my leave, but not before promising Governor Seward that I would take breakfast with him at eight o'clock; and as I passed out the outside door the Irish porter said to me, with a smiling face: "And by faith it is you who have brought us a Prisidint."

At eight the governor and I sat down to a simple and relishing breakfast. We had been relieved of a load of anxiety almost too great to bear. The President had reached Washington safely, and our spirits were exalted; and with a sense of great satisfaction we sipped our delicious coffee and loaded our plates with the first run of Potomac shad.

Mr. Blaine, in his "Twenty Years of Congress," has been led

into an error in speaking of the manner in which Lincoln reached Washington. He says: "He reached Washington by a night journey taken secretly, much against his own will and to his subsequent chagrin and mortification, but urged upon him by the advice of those in whose advice and wisdom he was forced to confide." The only truth in the statement is that he "reached Washington by a night journey taken secretly." I was the first man to see him after his arrival in Washington and talk with him of the incidents of his journey, and I know he was neither "mortified" nor "chagrined" at the manner in which he reached Washington. He expressed to me in the warmest terms his satisfaction at the complete success of his journey; and I have it from persons who were about him in Philadelphia and Harrisburg that the plan agreed upon met his hearty approval, and he expressed a cheerful willingness to adapt himself to the novel circumstances. I do not believe that Mr. Lincoln ever expressed a regret that he had not, "according to his own desire, gone through Baltimore in open day," etc. It is safe to say he never had any such "desire." His own detective, Pinkerton, a man who had his entire confidence, had been some time in Baltimore, with several members of his force, in unraveling rebel plots, produced to him the most conclusive evidence of a conspiracy to assassinate him. General Scott's detectives had discovered the same thing, and there was a great deal of individual testimony tending to establish the same fact. While Mr. Lincoln would have confronted any danger in the performance of duty, he was not a man given to bravado and quixotic schemes, and what he subsequently stated touching this matter comprises really all there is in it. He declared: "I did not believe then, nor do I now believe, I should have been assassinated had I gone through Baltimore as first contemplated, but *I thought it wise to run no risk where no risk was necessary.*" ("Lossing's Pictorial History of the Rebellion," vol. i., p. 279.) In the same paragraph Mr. Blaine says that "it must be creditable to the administration of Mr. Buchanan that ample provision had been made for the protection of the rightful ruler of the nation" (p. 240). If Mr. Blaine means by this that Mr. Buchanan, driven by public indignation, had ordered a few straggling companies of regular infantry to Washington, that is one thing; but if he referred to the protection of the "rightful ruler" of the nation in getting to Washington, his good faith was imposed upon. I was in a position

to know all that was going on in relation to Mr. Lincoln's journey to Washington, and I never heard it suggested or hinted that Mr. Buchanan occupied himself with that matter. I am satisfied he had no more knowledge of Mr. Lincoln's movements than those of "the man in the moon."

Mr. Lincoln remained quietly at his own home in Springfield during the Presidential canvass of 1860, but he watched narrowly all the incidents of the campaign. On the 26th of May he wrote me as follows :

" . . . I have your letters written since the nominations, but till now I have found no moment to say a word by way of answer. Of course I am glad that the nomination is well received by our friends, and I sincerely thank you for so informing me. So far as I can learn, the nominations take well everywhere, and if we get no back-set, it would seem as if they were going through.

"I hope you will write often ; and as you write more rapidly than I do, don't make your letters so short as mine. Yours, very truly,

"A. LINCOLN."

Mr. Lincoln had his periods of anxiety and deep concern during the canvass. As chairman of the House Congressional (Republican) Committee, I was engaged at Washington during the campaign. On the 9th of September Mr. Lincoln wrote me as follows from Springfield :

"Yours of the 5th was received last evening. I was right glad to get it. It contains the latest 'posting' which I now have. It relieves me some from a little anxiety I had about Maine. Jo Medill, on August 30, wrote me that Colfax had a letter from Mr. Hamlin, saying we were in great danger of losing two members of Congress in Maine, and that your brother would not have exceeding six thousand majority for Governor. I addressed you at once, at Galena, asking for your latest information. As you are at Washington, that letter you will receive some time after the Maine election. Yours, very truly,

"A. LINCOLN."

Though the election was over there came gloomy days for Mr. Lincoln, but he pondered well on the great problems before him. He had weighed well all the important questions which had arisen, and in him there was neither change nor shadow of turning. On the 13th day of December he wrote to me as follows :

"HON. E. B. WASHBURNE :

"*My Dear Sir* :—Your long letter received. Prevent as far as possible any of our friends from demoralizing themselves and our cause by entertaining propositions for compromise of any sort on slavery extension. There is no possible

compromise upon it but which puts us under again, and all our work to do over again. Whether it be a Missouri line or Eli Thayer's Popular Sovereignty, it is all the same. Let either be done, and immediately filibustering and extending slavery recommences. On that point hold firm as a chain of steel. Yours, as ever,

A. LINCOLN."

As the time of the inauguration drew near there was an intense anxiety not unmingled with trepidation all over the loyal North as to how Mr. Lincoln might meet the approaching crisis. Many and varied were the speculations as to what course he would take. Looking at his character and life, many feared he had not fully comprehended the gravity of the situation. On the contrary, Mr. Lincoln had weighed the whole matter, and fully determined in his own mind what course he would pursue. In December, 1860, he wrote me the following letter :

"Confidential.

"SPRINGFIELD, Dec. 21, 1860.

"HON. E. B. WASHBURNE :

*"My Dear Sir :—*Last night I received your letter, giving an account of your interview with General Scott, and for which I thank you. Please present my respects to the General, and tell him confidentially I shall be obliged to him to be as well prepared as he can to either *hold* or retake the forts, as the case may require, at and after the inauguration. Yours, as ever,

"A. LINCOLN."

I cannot here recount all Mr. Lincoln's acts of kindness to me while President. He always seemed anxious to gratify me, and I can recollect of no single favor that I asked of him that he did not cheerfully accord. I will mention a simple incident. In the fall of 1863, my brother, General Washburne, of Wisconsin, was stationed at a most unhealthy camp at Helena, Arkansas. He was taken dangerously sick with malarial dysentery, and there was little prospect of his recovery unless he could be removed to some healthier location. I wrote to Mr. Lincoln, briefly, asking for a leave of absence for him for cause of health, and in due time I received the following reply :

"Private and confidential.

*"EXECUTIVE MANSION, }
WASHINGTON, Oct. 26 1863. }*

"HON. E. B. WASHBURNE :

*"My Dear Sir :—*Yours of the 12th has been in my hands several days. Enclosed I send a leave of absence for your brother, in as good form as I think I

can safely put it. Without knowing whether he would accept it, I have tendered the Collectorship of Portland, Maine, to your other brother, the Governor.

"Thanks to both you and our friend Campbell for your kind words and intentions. A second term would be a great honor, and a great labor, which together, perhaps, I would not decline, if tendered. Yours truly,

"A. LINCOLN."

This last paragraph refers to a letter of the Honorable Thompson Campbell, whom I have before referred to in this paper, and in which we asked permission to bring him forward as a candidate for a re-election.

On the 13th of February, 1861, the two Houses of Congress met in joint session to count and declare the electoral vote. As in all times of great excitement, the air was filled with numberless and absurd rumors, and few were in fear that in some unforeseen way the ceremony of the count might be interrupted and the result not declared. And hence all Washington was on the *qui vive*. The joint meeting was to take place in the Hall of the House of Representatives at high noon. An immense throng filled the House end of the Capitol. All the gilded corridors leading to the Hall of the House were crowded, and the galleries packed. Beautiful and gorgeously dressed ladies entered the Hall, found their way into the cloak-rooms, and many of them occupied the seats of the members, who gallantly surrendered them for the occasion.

At twenty minutes after twelve the doorkeeper announced the Senate of the United States. The Senators entered, headed by their President, Honorable John C. Breckinridge, the members of the House rising to receive them. The Vice-President took his seat on the right of the Speaker of the House of Representatives (the Honorable William Pennington, of New Jersey). The joint convention of the two Houses was presided over by Mr. Breckinridge, who served out his term of Vice-President till March 4, 1861. The Honorable Lyman Trumbull was appointed teller on the part of the Senate, and Messrs. Phelps, of Missouri, and Washburne, of Illinois, on the part of the House. The count proceeded without incident, and the Vice-President announced the election of Lincoln and Hamlin. Mr. Sherman, of Ohio, then offered the ordinary resolution of notification to the President-elect, by a committee of two members from the House to be joined by one member from the Senate. Mr. Hindman, of Arkansas, one of the most violent and vindictive secessionists, insisted that the same com-

mittee "inform General Scott that there was no more use for his janizaries about the Capitol, the votes being counted and the result proclaimed." Mr. Grow, of Pennsylvania, responded that gentlemen seemed to trouble themselves a good deal about General Scott on all occasions.

There was a certain feeling of relief among the loyal people of the country that Mr. Lincoln had been declared to be duly elected President, without the least pretense of illegality or irregularity.

But I must bring this paper to a close. The rebellion, in April, 1865, was fast approaching an end. Having expressed a desire to be at the front, wherever that might be, when the hour of its final collapse might come finally to strike, General Grant had given me a pass of the broadest character, to go anywhere in the Union lines. The news of the fall of Richmond reached Galena at eleven o'clock Monday morning, April 3, 1865. I took the train "for the front" at five P.M., and arrived in Washington, Thursday morning, April 6th. I found that the President, Mrs. Lincoln, and a party of friends had left on an excursion for Fortress Monroe, City Point, and Richmond. Mr. Blaine joined me, and we made the trip together to City Point. On arriving there, late Friday afternoon, we found the President and party had returned from Richmond, and were on their steamer, the "River Queen," which was to remain at City Point over-night. In the evening Mr. Blaine and myself went on board the steamer to pay our respects to the President. I never passed a more delightful evening. Mr. Lincoln was in perfect health and in exuberant spirits. His relation of his experiences and of all he saw at Richmond had all of that quaintness and originality for which he was distinguished. Full of anecdote and reminiscence, he never flagged during the whole evening. His son Robert was in the military service and with the advancing army, and knowing that I was bound for the "front" the next morning, he said to me: "I believe I will drop Robert a line if you will take it. I will hand it to you in the morning before you start." I went to the wharf the next morning, and soon Mr. Lincoln came ashore from his steamer, with the letter in his hand. He was erect and buoyant, and it seemed to me that I had never seen him look so great and grand. After a few words of conversation, he handed me the letter, and I bid him what proved to be, alas! a *final adieu*. I made my way with all diligence and through much tribulation to the "front," and arrived at Appomattox in season

to see the final surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia, and General Lee and his associate generals prisoners of war. Returning to City Point, I found awaiting me there a small government steamer which was to take me to Washington. On arriving there I met the most terrible news that had ever shocked the civilized world: *Mr. Lincoln had been assassinated.* That was Saturday night, April 15, 1865. I gave directions to have the steamer proceed directly to Washington, where I arrived early Monday morning, April 17, and in season to participate in the stupendous preparations to do honor to the memory of the dead President. I was on the Congressional Committee to escort his remains to Springfield, Illinois, where I followed his colossal hearse to the grave.

E. B. WASHBURN.